

House Armed Services Committee

DEMOCRATS

Ike Skelton, Ranking Member

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Democrats React to Army Fiscal Year 2006 Budget Request

Washington, DC – Today, the House Armed Services Committee heard testimony from the Army Secretary and Chief of Staff regarding the Army's budget for fiscal year 2006. While Committee Democrats praised the bravery and professionalism of our soldiers and commended the budget for funding a number of Army programs, they voiced concern with several important items, including end strength, modularity and the death gratuity.

End Strength

"The demands on our force—in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere around the world—are not going away. We have to meet those needs, but we must do it without straining our soldiers and their families to the breaking point," said Ranking Member Skelton (MO).

"Matching the size of our force with the demands we make on it is essential if we want to avoid wearing them out. This is why I am disappointed that this budget fails to include funds for the permanent increase in Army end-strength that Congress authorized last year."

Modularity

"We cannot fail to invest in the transformation we need to protect lives, to provide security, and to ensure effective management of the Army," commented Representative Silvestre Reyes (TX). "The Army has laid out an ambitious plan to transform our forces to meet emerging national security challenges."

"With ongoing operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and the global war on terror, finding the needed dollars for the creation of new modular brigade combat units will be exceptionally challenging. But Congress and the Army must work together to fund this critical transformation. The future of the Army, the future of our nation, and the future of global peace depends upon it."

Death Gratuity

"I am disappointed to see that this budget request does not include free life insurance for our service men and women serving on the front lines or additional funding to increase the death gratuity paid to the family members of those killed in combat," remarked Representative Steve Israel (NY).

"We ask our service men and women to voluntarily make the greatest sacrifice to their country, and the least we can do is ensure their families' financial security."

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